

Ambassador Nancy Powell inaugurated a youth sports competition today in Dang, an event which formed part of the US Agency for International Development (USAID) funded project, Youth Initiatives for Peace and Reconciliation.

The project, which is implemented by Mercy Corps and BASE, actively engages over 30,000 youths from various communities in peace, community reconciliation and decision making processes throughout five districts of the Western region: Banke, Bardya, Kailali, Kanchanpur and Dang. Events such as the one in Dang, which included football and volleyball matches, are held in the spirit of promoting tolerance and provide opportunities to young women and men to engage in dialogue and discuss challenges that affect youth in Nepal.

Opening the event in Dang with the keynote address Ambassador Powell stated, "I applaud the involvement of the youth of Dang in organizing this significant event, which demonstrates not only the important role that young people have played in community reconciliation, but also their crucial role in Nepal's future." The Ambassador also congratulated the participants for their important contributions in community service and making a difference through small, but meaningful changes in their own communities.

Ambassador Powell distributed sports equipment, including jerseys, athletic shoes, hats and socks, to each of the 27 team captains. The equipment was donated by the Nike Corporation to Mercy Corps as part of NIKE's social corporate responsibility program.

Prior to the inauguration over 900 youth including athletes, guest players, managers, referees and volunteers participated in the peace march in Tulsipur municipality. A total of 1,007 people took part in the competitions sponsored by the project in the Western Region – with over 5,000 jerseys distributed.